Mukanov offers another measure of the impact of Islam in his reference to the Shariat. The Shariat is technically the canonical law of Islam. Unlike the canonical law of western civilization, however, it governs the entire life of the devout Moslem, not merely his relationship to his church. The Shariat governs, in theory, the daily habits of the Moslem, prescribes whom he may or may not marry, and sets forth the entire body of social relations and controls—between master and servant, man and woman, parent and child, ruler and governed. The fact that the very existence of this body of rules of conduct is little known among the nomadic Kazakhs is of great significance. Taken in combination with other less striking bits of evidence, it points to the superficiality of the Kazakhs' adoption of Islam. Although Moslem observance and practice is everywhere more formalized in urban than in rural surroundings, for the nomadic Kazakhs it is not merely less systematic; it is also less important.

KAZAKH FOLK RELIGIONS

At the end of the 19th century a Russian, Poiarkov, traveled among the Kazakhs in the northeast of their domain, in Semirechie in the territory of the Great Horde. He learned that these Kazakhs had not seen a mullah, or Moslem cleric, until some 15 or 20 years before his travels. In the 1690's mullahs were still exceedingly rare among the Kazakhs who lived near the Chinese border. Few Kazakhs knew Moslem prayers, or if they did, only inaccurately; few knew the Koran.[1]

Because he did not overestimate the influence of Islam on the Kazakhs, Poiarkov was able to supply positive details of the religions of these people. He distinguished between two layers, the remains of the old folk religion and an overlay of the new Islamic faith among the literate. The most important of the old beliefs or cults is that centered around the soul of the deceased ancestor, arvak among the Kirgiz, aurak among the Kazakhs. These ancestors represent a strong force among their living descendants and are prayed to and invoked in time of need. The ancestor cult forms an integral part of the traditional social structure of the Kazakhs, built as it is around the genealogy and the preservation of the descent line. However, according to Poiarkov, the cult of ancestors was weakening under the impact of Islam on the one hand and Russian acculturation on the other.[2]

The term shamanism is often mentioned in connection with the Kazakhs. In this religion the leader, or shaman, is ecstatic, hysterical, marked by abnormal behavior (not only according to the standards of western society, but also according to his own); he is considered to be possessed by and have control over the world of the spirits, and by entering into relations with them can use them to his own will. He cures illnesses, has powers of divination, can avert misfortune and the evil eye. For many centuries he has been far in advance of western medicine by recognizing psychosomatic disorders; he concentrates on them, and so

[1] Poiarkov, 1891, pp. 21-22.
[2] Ibid., pp. 23-28.

181 as he sees a possibility of success or gain. Vindictiveness also constitutes one of his motives, when he is not inclined to stealing. Most Kazakhs are very cold-blooded in appearance and in general try to seem to be men in
• [158] control of their passions. Yet this is a mask for as soon as this false equilibrium is destroyed by something, they are seized by a terrible quick temper and fury sometimes leading to frenzy and raging which spares neither them-
[147] selves nor others. The Kazakhs have a remarkable ability to bear physical pain. Probably this is a consequence of their rough upbringing, which to a still greater degree makes them insensitive to the sufferings of others. In this connection the women form a praiseworthy exception, and in the past more than one unhappy /351/ prisoner was indebted to them for the easing of his fate, and sometimes even for his freedom.

461 As a result of their limited desires the Kazakhs are lazy. The Kazakh works hard only from extreme need, and when his stomach is full and his body clothed, then for the most part he prefers the eastern keif (delightful idleness) to any work.

203 Idleness and boredom have aroused curio-
574 sity in him. The Kazakh not only loves to listen to news, but along with this he has a great inclination to tell about things. Every smallest event or incident, no matter how trifling, gives him an excellent occasion to ride to the nearest aul and relate in great detail his khabar or news. It is self-evident that during this the Kazakh is not averse to adorning it a little. To know some interesting